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CANAAN, SHEM AND JAPHETH.

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A SERMON,

BY E. HARWOOD, D.D.

RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, NEW HAVEN.

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Canaan, Shem and Japheth.

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S E R M O N ,

PREACHED IN

Trinity Church, New Haven,

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1863.

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BY

EDWIN HARWOOD, D. D.

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NEW HAVEN :

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS H. PEASE.

TUTTLE, MOREHOUSE & TAYLOR, PRINTERS.

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1863.



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# SERMON.

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AND HE SAID, CURSED BE CANAAN : A SERVANT OF SERVANTS SHALL HE BE  
UNTO HIS BRETHREN. AND HE SAID, BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD OF SHEM,  
AND CANAAN SHALL BE HIS SERVANT. GOD SHALL ENLARGE JAPHETH AND HE  
SHALL DWELL IN THE TENTS OF SHEM. AND CANAAN SHALL BE HIS SERVANT.  
Gen. ix : 25, 26, 27.

THIS is a voice which has come down to us from  
the early morning of the world's life. There is po-  
etic rhythm in its movement, and it has been trans-  
lated thus by Bishop Lowth :

“Cursed be Canaan !  
A servant of servants to his brothers let him be !  
Blessed be Jehovah the God of Shem !  
And let Canaan be their servant !  
May God extend Japheth !  
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem !  
And let Canaan be their servant.”\*

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\* Lowth's Lectures upon Hebrew Poetry, Leet. iv, p. 46, Lond.  
4th ed. 1839. See also Tuck, in his Commentary upon Genesis.  
Halle, 1838.

“Verflucht sei Kanaan,  
Der Knecht der Knechte sei er seinen Brüdern ;  
Gepriesen sei Jehova, der Gott Sems,  
Und Kanaan sei sein Knecht :  
Weit mache es Gott dem Japhet  
Und er wohne in Sems Zelten,  
Und Kanaan sei sein Knecht.”

As a curse pronounced upon Canaan, as a blessing upon Shem and Japheth, it has unusual solemnity and strength of expression.

It is moreover, a prophecy, and the processes of its fulfillment are marvellous. They can be traced readily in the history of the nations, and are fitted to awaken our wonder. The review of the subject must tend to strengthen our faith in the reality both of the divine government of the world and of divine revelation: for the facts brought to light by it cannot be questioned. God manifests Himself in history.

The text itself needs perhaps some explanation. Let us *first* seek its interpretation: and *secondly* consider the place of Canaan, Shem and Japheth respectively, in history.

I. 1. Cursed be Canaan: According to the narrative in Genesis, Canaan was the son of Ham, and the grandson of Noah. It is generally, and with reason, supposed, that the word Canaan here does not represent one person simply, but the family or descendants of Canaan; in other words the Canaanites.

Now it must be observed that the imprecation does not fall upon Ham himself, nor upon all the tribes or families descended from him, but upon those tribes alone known in scripture and history as Canaanites. In the tenth chapter of Genesis,\* Ham is said to

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\* Genesis, x: 6.

have had four sons: Cush, from whom are the Ethiopians, Mizraim, the Egyptians, Phut, the Libyans, and Canaan. If now scripture had not mentioned these names, if it had told us only of Canaan, then we might most properly consider the curse pronounced upon Canaan as designed for all the descendants of Ham. But Canaan is one only of the four sons of Ham, and inasmuch as scripture itself does not include the remaining three within the curse, but limits it, by what right have we, in our interpretation, to suppose or to claim that it is designed for all the families of Ham upon earth? Scripture mentions Canaan alone, and therefore we limit the application and design of the imprecation to Canaan. We must besides remember that the words Canaan and Canaanite are often used in scripture; they are used intelligibly and consistently, and never once, does either word mean or represent all the descendants of Ham; never once, moreover, is any people specifically African and living in Africa at the time, designated by the word Canaan.

The land of Canaan is thus described in Genesis x : 19—"And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar unto Gaza: as thou goest unto Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah and Zeboim, even unto Lasha." It is the land promised to the people Israel, and eventually occupied by them. It is in Asia and not in Africa, known fami-

liarly to us all by the name of “the holy land.” The Canaanites were driven from it, or subjugated or destroyed in the course of time by the people Israel. In the one hundred and thirty-fifth psalm,\* the people were called upon to praise Jehovah, because, amongst other things, He had smitten great nations and slain mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and had given their land for a heritage, an heritage unto Israel, His people. The case cannot be stated more plainly.

Now then the curse is pronounced upon Canaan, upon this branch of the family of Ham; and the curse is, *a servant of servants*, that is, the most abject servant let him be! The prophetic curse was fulfilled in the destruction of Canaanitish power in their own land, in the misery and wretchedness of their poverty and submission to the conquering race; in the overthrow even of Tyre and Sidon, where commerce sat enthroned as a queen—and, if we press the point, in the ruin and desolation of Carthage, which once, under Hannibal, had threatened the existence of Rome itself. The text and subject are utterly perverted when applied to the negro races of western Africa, and to the servitude to which they have been subjected upon this continent. Such an

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\* Psalm cxxxv: 10–11.

interpretation or use of the passage flies in the face of facts, of sound criticism, of ethnological science, and of the opinions of the best scholars both of ancient and modern times. It concerns, as I have said, only the family of Canaan and their subjugation, and was so understood by the Jews themselves. By these, the Canaanites were regarded as an accursed race, and in the book Deuteronomy,\* we read the following: "When the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." This certainly throws strong light upon the sense which Israel attached to the curse upon Canaan.†

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\* Deuteronomy vii: 2.

† Considerable interest is manifested in this country at present in our Text. To some of my readers I hope the following sketch of the history of its interpretation may not be altogether unwelcome. It will be seen, from the authorities quoted, that there is a general uniformity of opinion until we come to modern times. Some modern interpreters have seen fit, in their anxiety either to establish the truth of the prophecy, or to find some warrant for the servitude of the modern Africans, in S. Scripture, to undertake an exposition, warranted neither by the text itself, nor by history, nor by ethnological fact. To present then a general sketch of the *line of interpretation*, I will cite Josephus, Augustine, Chrysostom, Bochart, Bayle, Bp. Patrick, Dr. Turner, Tuch, Knobel, upon one side, and on the other, Bp. Newton, Keil, and Dr. Bush.

*Josephus.* Book 1, c. 7. Antiq.:—as touching Ham (by reason he was his ally in blood), he cursed him not, but his posterity after him. But although the others escaped this malediction, yet God inflicted it on the successors of Canaan.

2. We turn now to the blessings recorded in the Text. The form of the benediction upon Shem is

*Augustine*, in Bk 1, of his questions in *Heptateuchum*, (Works, vol. iii, p. 551, Paris, Migne).—Quare peccans Cham in patris offensa non in seipso, sed in filio suo Chanaan maledicatur: nisi quia prophetatum est quodammodo terram Chanaan, ejectis inde Chanaanais et debellatis, accepturos fuisse filios Israel, qui venirent de semine Sem?—Why is Ham sinning in an act of infamy against his father, cursed not in his own person, but in his son Canaan, unless because it is prophesied in what manner the children of Israel, who should come of the seed of Shem, were to receive the land of Canaan, the Canaanites being ejected from it and completely vanquished?

*Chrysostom*, in the sermon on the one legislator, and in his homily upon Gen. c. 9, lays stress upon the servitude of Canaan. He does not throw much light upon the text. He endeavors to apply it morally by showing that the Canaanites were reduced to servitude because of their immense moral corruption.

*Bochart*.—Phaleg is a famous book: it marks an era in our knowledge of Genesis, 9 and 10 ch. Noe videlicet Chamum exceratus prædixerat fore ut ejus posteris servi essent servorum: atque id impletum in Chanaanais tum eum subire coacti sunt Israelitarum jugum, qui Egyptiis diu servierant. p. 3. (Phaleg, Frank. on the Main, 1681). Noah indeed having cursed Ham, had prophesied that his posterity should be servants of servants, and it was fulfilled in the Canaanites when they were compelled to submit to the yoke of the Israelites, who themselves for a long while had been serving the Egyptians. [The reader should bear this last fact in mind. Israel served Egypt. Egypt was hamitic, and thus we see one line of Shem in servitude to one family of Ham. If all Ham's descendants were involved in the curse, how shall we account for Israel's bondage?] Again, ib. p. 349, operosè quaeritur cur Chami maledictionem in caput filii Chanaan Noe contorsit. . . . sed quaeritur iterum cur ex posteris Chanaan in hos potius quam in illos contorta sit eadem maledictio. Siquidem ex Chanaanæ orum familiis undecim, sex immunes præstitit, Deus ab hoc anathemate. Siderios nimirum, et Arkæos, et Sinæos et Aradios et Sama-

peculiar. It is not directed immediately to him, but to Jehovah, whom Shem worshipped, and who was

tæos, et Hamatheos; caeteros arcano quidem judicio, sed justissimo internecioni devovit." It is diligently asked why Noah should have hurled the malediction against Ham, upon the head of his son Canaan . . . but again, inquiry is made why, out of the posterities of Canaan, the same malediction should have fallen upon these, rather than those, since of the eleven families of Canaanites (see the table Gen. 10), God preserved six safe from the anathema, viz., the Sidonians, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Harvadites, the Zemarites and the Hamathites, but the rest, by a secret yet most just judgment, He devoted to destruction. This last sentence respecting the six safe tribes must be received with qualification.

*Bayle*.—Dict. Historiq. et Critiq. Art. Cham:—Mais cette malediction n'etait autre chose qu'une prophetie des victoires que les descendants de Sem remporteroient sur les descendants de Chanaan. sous Josuè.

Compare also Patrick on Gen. 9 : 23–27. Calmet, and Dr. S. H. Turner's Companion to Genesis, p. 224.

*Tuch*.—Commentary upon Genesis (Halle, 1838).—Wäre Ham selbst genannt, so würde der Fluch gleichmässig Mizraim, Kusch, u. s. w. treffen im Widerspruch mit der Geschichte. Nur auf Kanaan kam es an, und darum ist er auch genannt, p. 188. Had Ham himself been named, the curse would have, in contradiction with history, concerned Mizraim (Egypt), Cush (Ethiopia), &c. It fell alone upon Canaan, and consequently he is named.

*Knobel*.—Genesis (Leipzig, 1860). Er verflucht nicht den Übelthäter, sondern dessen Sohn Kanaan, dies widerstrebte der althebr. Denkweise nicht; nach ihr wurden die Sünden der Väter oft an der kindern gestraft (Ex. 20 : 5. Job 24 : 19) . . . Er geht aber dahin, dass Kanaan seinen Brüdern dienstbar sein soll, also auf unterwerfung der Kanaaniter durch Semiten und Japhetiten, . . . und Kanaan sei Knecht ihnen. Die Kanaaniter sollen dem Semiten unterworfen sein. p. 101–102. He does not curse the transgressor, but his son Canaan. This is not in conflict with the old Hebrew way of thinking—according to it the sins of the fathers are often visited upon the children (Ex. 20 : 5. Job 24 :

the author of all his happiness and well being. "Blessed be Jehovah, God of Shem!"—not of one

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19), but the curse goes on—that Canaan shall be subject to his brethren—also to the subjugation of the Canaanites by Semites and Japhetites. *And be Canaan their servant.* The Canaanites shall be subject to the Semites.

This is the view demanded by the Text and supported by the general voice ; but ever since Bishop Newton's work on the prophecies has been before the english-speaking world,—many have unconsciously to themselves, found another and a different reading, and have supposed the text to mean something upon which it is entirely silent. "Hitherto" he says (p. 18, Amer. reprint of Dove's Es.), "we have explained the prophecy according to the present copies of our Bible : " [i. e. he has set forth the usual interpretations adopted generally by all scholars] : "but if we were to correct the text as we should any ancient classic author in a like case, the whole perhaps might be made easier and plainer. *Ham the father of Canaan* is mentioned in the preceding part of the story, and how then came the person of a sudden to be changed into Canaan ? The Arabic version in these three verses, hath the *father of Canaan* instead of Canaan. Some copies of the Septuagint likewise have Ham instead of Canaan, as if Canaan was a corruption of the text. . . . May we not suppose therefore . . . that the copyist by mistake wrote only Canaan, instead of Ham the father of Canaan. . . . By this reading all the three sons of Noah are included in the prophecy, &c."

But,

1. Why does Bishop Newton undertake to improve the Text ? There is no well grounded suspicion of its inaccuracy. No approved MS reads "Ham the father of"—before Canaan. No interpreter, whose critical acumen is acknowledged, feels the need of any such emendation. If Bishop Newton be permitted to alter the text here, why may not any one else be permitted to alter other and all readings which may not please or seem congruous to him ? And then what becomes of the Bible ? This procedure is simply an offense against all criticism.

Grotius found it impossible to reconcile the chronology of Gal. 2 : 1, with Acts 15th chap., and he proposed to read "then after

person simply, but of the descendants of Shem, and especially of the people Israel, who were the chosen

*four years,*" &c., instead of, "then after *fourteen,*" &c., which is the common reading. How did critics treat the amendment or conjecture? They dismissed it at once,—not because it did not make the matter "plainer and easier," but because no MS sustained the conjecture. Appeal was made at once to the evidence, and the evidence was against the emendation and in favor of the received reading.

Again: some Unitarians have rejected the first five verses of St. John's Gospel—but the verdict of sound criticism is that they are above all suspicion.

Cases of the sort might be multiplied. *Readings of the sacred text are matters of evidence*—and all evidence is in favor of the received reading, *Cursed be Canaan,* &c. How preposterous then to throw a new and unauthorized phrase into the text. If such license be allowable we might as well regard the study of the Bible as useless.

2. Besides this, if the difficulties in the way of the emendation of the text were not insuperable, the facts of history present difficulties equally grave. Egypt—Mizraim, is hamitic, (see Gen. 10 : 6). But Egypt has a most conspicuous place in the world's history. Egypt had a long and brilliant civilization. What then, if all Ham be comprehended within the curse, becomes of its truth—a servant of servants shall he be, &c. Shall we be told in reply that Egypt was long ago annihilated? I answer, that Israel, as a nation, was long ago destroyed. The reality of the prophecy falls to pieces when it is applied to all races descended from Ham.

Again, Nimrod, no doubt impious, was nevertheless the first man who organized monarchy, if not empire; yet Nimrod, looming up through the mists of even pre-historic times, was the son of Cush, and Cush was the son of Ham (Gen. 10 : 8). We must, if we apply the curse to all Ham's descendants, no longer laugh at the ingenious Spaniard who has said that they all (Ham's descendants) are either tyrants or slaves, and that tyrants are slaves: so that when the prophecy says, a servant of servants he shall be, it may refer to powerful emperors, autoerats, &c. I think we may leave Bishop Newton.

people of Jehovah, His worshippers and servants whom He loved.

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*Keil*, to the same or a kindred purpose: (for although not especially eminent, he is too good a critic to undertake to patch the text in this place).—Genesis (Leipzig, 1861). He claims that inasmuch as Ham has no share in the blessings of Shem and Japheth, so this imprecation, although it names expressly only Canaan, must be applied “*implicité* Hams ganze Geschlecht”—“implicitly to Ham’s whole race.” “Die zu Kanaan gehörender Phönizier nebst den Punier und die Aegypter werden von japhetischen Persern, Macedoniern und Römern unterjocht, und die übrigen hamitischen Völkern stammte theilten entweder das gleiche Loos, oder seufzen noch jetzt, wie, Z. B. die Neger und andere Afrikanische stämme, mit der Sünde ihres Stammvaters unter dem Joche der drückendsten Sklaverei.” p. 105. The Phœnicians belonging to Canaan, besides the Carthaginians and the Egyptians were subdued by japhetic Persians, Macedonians and Romans, and the remaining hamitic tribes shared either the like fate, or sigh even now, as e. g. the negroes and other African races, with the sin of their ancestor, under the yoke of the most oppressive slavery.

Undoubtedly, negroes “sigh under the yoke of the most oppressive slavery,” but negroes are not Canaanites; and inasmuch as the curse was pronounced upon Canaan, and was understood by the ancient Jews and by ancient Christian interpreters (to say nothing of the moderns) to *mean* Canaan, I do not see with what propriety it can be applied to negro races who are not at all named in the text. Why not with equal justice apply it to all subject races—to all races who have lost their autonomy—as the Poles, Irish, Hungarians, &c. It is simply absurd.

Geo. Bush: Notes, &c.. upon Genesis, 14th Ed., New York, 1855.

“Although the sentence here recorded was to spend itself mainly upon the descendants of Ham in the line of Canaan, yet it is an historical fact that the curse of servitude has signally fallen upon other branches of his posterity, of which the fate of the African race is a standing evidence: but how far we are to refer that fact to the effects of Noah’s curse on this occasion is not clear.”

Not clear! to whom? It is clear to all who perceive that these

3. "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem : and Canaan shall be his servant." There is some obscurity in this blessing, at least in the phrase "and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem." In the first member of the sentence there is a prophecy that Japheth shall not be confined within narrow territorial limits, but that he shall spread himself abroad and have free scope ; in the last member, doubt arises whether the word *he* (he shall dwell in the tents of Shem) refer to God or to Japheth. If it refer to Japheth, then the question comes, what is meant, by *the tents of Shem*? Interpreters according-

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negro races are not Canaanites, and that the text has nothing to do with them : but it is not clear to men who are seeking to find some connection between Noah's curse and African servitude.

"Post hoc ergo propter hoc" is vicious both in logic and in criticism. Dr. Bush states an undoubted fact, but why labor to connect it with our text?

Dr. Smyth of Charleston, S. C. (The unity of the human races. N. Y. 1850), p. 24, assumes that on "the three races," a separate destiny was pronounced ; and that "servility" was the doom of Ham. Let us ask, where? clearly not in our text, and if not there, no where! Much rubbish may be found in the book. I refer to it as an instance of the way in which S. Scripture is misinterpreted and its facts perverted.

I must bring this long note to a close, with this simple statement, that the great interpreters, ancient and modern, *Jewish*, Catholic-minded, rationalistic, with wonderful unanimity find the curse of the text fulfilled in the wretchedness and misery in which Canaan was involved. Some new interpreters, *not one of whom* is of conspicuous authority amongst critical scholars, go beyond the letter and meaning of the text and extend it to all the descendants of Ham, and to western Africans, in violation both of sound exegesis and scientific truth.

ly are divided in their opinions. Some read thus: "he shall dwell in the tents of Shem," that is, God, who was honored by the descendants of Shem, especially by the Hebrews, shall dwell with them, be, as it were, an inmate of their own homes. The objection to this view, briefly stated is, that the blessing upon Shem has already been pronounced, and the sacred writer is concerned only with Japheth. Others think that Japheth is still the subject of the sentence, and that he is here promised, partly, possession of territory occupied by descendants of Shem, and partly religious fellowship, the true religion coming to Japheth through the agency of Shem. The objection to this view is, that it introduces Japheth in the act of limiting the power of Shem. There is a third opinion. The word Shem in Hebrew means name, and hence renown: and it is maintained that the phrase—"he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" means, he shall have famous, renowned dwelling places. This may appear somewhat forced, as if it were a play upon words; nevertheless it is supported by commentators of thorough learning, and is perhaps the best of all the interpretations advanced. Grammar, however, does not forbid any one of the three.

And Canaan shall be, or let Canaan be his servant as well also as Shem's.

II. Let us turn our thoughts to the place of Canaan, Shem and Japheth respectively, in history, with

especial reference of course to our text. I wish to call your attention to the wonderful fact that the particulars stated in the text are illustrated in the history of the races concerned. Canaan long ago fell under the dominion of Shem and of Japheth: Shem is, in a marvellous way, associated with the idea and the faith of men in Jehovah: and Japheth has enlarged his borders, and has renowned dwelling places and lands. In the text, then, the destiny of each of the families named, is foreshadowed, and in the grand processes of history, it has been unrolled during thousands of years, up to this moment, in a style transcending all human forethought and calculation. It becomes us indeed to recognize the governing hand of almighty God in the fortunes of races—and surely it is difficult to suppose that His spirit had no agency in this wonderful record which is at once prophetic and historic.

1. We follow the order of the text. Canaan is named first. While Israel was in “the house of bondage” in Egypt, Canaan had cities, government, pursuits, commerce and forms of religion. And antecedently to Jacob, yes to the patriarch Abraham, the Canaanite had civil institutions, or at least small kingdoms,\* though no extended power. We know more, or at least we have more frequent notices of this people after they came into collision with Israel,

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\* Genesis, 14th chapter.

by whom they were subdued. *Vae Victis!* Wo to the conquered, had meanings quite as tragical three thousand years ago as now. The Canaanites had built cities and planted vineyards of which Israel took possession. Their fate was the fate of all conquered peoples, especially of peoples whose utter extermination is sought. In part they mingled with and were absorbed by Israel; in part they submitted, and became hewers of wood and drawers of water; in part leaving their homes, they fled before victorious Israel, and became colonists; while the victor enjoyed the spoils. According to an ancient author, a monument existed\* in Tangiers with this inscription: "we are fugitives from the face of Joshua the robber."

The Canaanites were the first great merchants known to history. Commerce first became magnificent at Tyre and Sidon. The memory of the splendor of these cities does not fade. They were beautiful, luxurious, rich, but vigorous. Colonists from them founded cities in Africa and in Spain. The Carthagenians were Canaanites, and Augustine informs us that in his day, country people around Hippo claimed to be of Canaanitish origin.

Their worship was idolatrous and licentious. It was a species of nature-worship, and their gods are known by the names, amongst others, of Astarte,

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\* B. C. 400.

Baal and Dagon. The Jews were taught to look upon the religion of Canaan with the utmost horror, and in it we find one reason why they regarded Canaan as an accursed race.

Canaan never reached the height of great empire. Its history is the history of a family group of races, rather than of a splendid political structure. It stood, nevertheless, apparently at least, upon the threshold of dominion, when its most illustrious character and representative, Hannibal,—a soldier surpassed in military genius by no other soldier, not even by Julius Cæsar,—having slain the flower and strength of Roman knighthood at Cannæ, having annihilated the army of the republic, by a quick march might have seized Rome itself. He won imperishable fame for himself, although he lost his opportunity and failed to secure lasting power for the Canaanitish race. “Never,” says Dr. Arnold in his Roman history, “was the wisdom of God’s providence more manifest than in the issue of the struggle between Rome and Carthage. It was clearly for the good of mankind that Hannibal should be conquered: his triumph would have stopped the progress of the world.”

Thus the Canaanites fell in their own land before Israel, and their colonies succumbed to the power of Japheth. Although they possessed within themselves many elements of great strength, they never could

form a state which could give laws, institutions and ideas to any considerable portion of the world.

2. But we must pass to the semitic family—"Blessed be Jehovah the God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant."

Here however, we do not concern ourselves with all races which carry the name of Shem, but only with Israel, one line or branch of the semitic people. We have seen that Canaan became his servant; that Israel took possession of the land of Canaan and destroyed its kingdoms. This is historical fact. Much more however remains. Canaan perished, but Shem—Israel, though never what we name a great imperial power, has influenced the world in a degree altogether disproportioned to its political or numerical strength. It was and ever has been an isolated people; it has wielded politically no direct influence in the counsels of the nations. In the day of its strength, it held itself aloof and looked down upon the world, not upon Canaan alone, nor upon Egypt alone, but upon all idolatrous races. As a power it has long since been annihilated. Canaan itself has not belonged to it for two thousand years: and yet the world is still interested in Israel. Scholars and antiquarians and philosophers occupy their minds with Babylon, with Tyre, with Egypt, with Carthage, but the people of christendom, plain men and women who know nothing of letters, who care nothing for questions of race, or of ancient history, are mov-

ed by the history of the people Israel, and persist in caring for the land which was the scene and home of their national fortunes and their national disasters. How is this? What special attraction draws *us* who are descendants of Japheth, to the fortunes, the life, we may say, of the people Israel? To all intents and purposes we discover the answer to this question in the text: "Blessed be Jehovah, God of Shem." Israel was the worshipper of Jehovah God, and Israel was the people through whom He has revealed Himself—His word and law, His justice and grace,—to the world. All the nations and families of the earth besides, were idolatrous. They were worshippers of the forces of nature, of the products of the earth, of the sun, moon, stars—of animals, and of heroes. The great families of the world, the descendants of Ham, of Japheth, and in part of Shem, had each their peculiar religions and mythologies, but this people Israel recognized, adored and followed the Jehovah God, the Maker of heaven and earth. Jehovah their Lord was one, while the gods of the nations were many. They appear, therefore, from the earliest period of their separate existence, as witnesses for the unity of the Almighty God.

Nor is this all. They were set apart by divine Providence for this sublime office or duty. God made Himself known to them and became their covenant God. He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt.

He revealed to them His law, and during their history, psalmists and prophets became His organs and agents through whom He taught the people and preserved them in their allegiance. The words of these prophets still sound forth through the world. We employ them to embody our thoughts of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah. The psalmist gives us words wherewith to express both our penitence, and our thanksgivings: he puts into our mouths "songs for our joy." The deepest feelings of our hearts make answer to the songs of Israel; the most fervid thoughts of men touching God, are kindled by the prophets of Israel, and hence Shem has in this way the blessing of God, and we recognize him as the depository of divine truth and revelation.

Nor is this even all. "In the fullness of time, God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Jesus the Redeemer and Savior was of the "seed of Abraham," and so was of the family of Israel. He was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, in the language of St. Paul, was "a minister of the circumcision to confirm the promises made of God unto the fathers." The incarnation and work of the Son of God were the crowning act of divine revelation, designed for the whole world, and yet it was made through Shem--through one line or branch of his descendants. This manifestation of God was made

late in time. Christ came unto His own, "but His own received Him not;" they rejected the blessing promised to their father Abraham, and crucified the Lord of glory. This act was their ruin. Nevertheless we must bear in mind that God sent His Son into the world, an Israelite by birth, of an Israelite mother, and in Him the significance of Shem for the human race at large, reached its climax. Israel reaped the whirlwind, and soon afterwards ceased to be a nation, but the race Israel remains. The position, the influence, the religious strength of Shem, coming from Jehovah, cannot be adequately measured. Shem may be said to have taught the world; for "salvation is of the Jews." The office of Shem in human history is grand and permanent;\* it is that of witness for God, and of instrument through whom His purposes of grace and mercy towards the world have been accomplished and set forth.

I cannot regard this as an accident. I cannot think that by some happy chance the Jewish people have had this remarkable place in history. The hand of God is visible in the work to which they have been called.

3. The ways of Providence, still farther, and the prophetic character of our text together with its ful-

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\* In his *Vie de Jesus*, Renan says—"C'est la race semitique qui a la gloire d'avoir fait la religion de l'humanite." p. 5. It is extraordinary that his interpretation of the life of Jesus should be what it is.

fillment, are equally illustrated in the history, the work and the position of Japheth.\* Canaan and Shem precede Japheth in the order of civilization and of empire. Japheth—the peoples who have descended from him, have been the great colonists and wanderers over the world. “God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.” From the land of Armenia and Asia Minor, the japhetic races have wandered forth—some to the east, but chiefly towards the north and west: some of them towards the north of Europe, others to the centre, and others still along the southern coasts and to the islands of the Mediterranean. They are the great races whose civilization, laws, letters and institutions are the study and the admiration of modern men; they are the races at this moment supreme in the affairs of this world. The Grecian and the Roman, the Scandinavian and the Russian, the German and the Gaul, the English and the Celt, all European nations and names are comprehended within this one designation. The history of Europe is the history of the japhetic races. They have been and are foremost in the arts, in war, in government, and in all that invests human affairs with earthly splendor or with romantic charm or with solid power. Their public buildings and temples in the glistening beauty of spotless mar-

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\* Japheth=indo-european, or indo-germanic peoples.

ble, are the acknowledged models of proportion and form. Their sculpture is a perpetual marvel, the admiration of the world. Egypt has its pyramids and sphinx, Assyria its winged lions—but Japhet has wrought the Apollo, the Laocoon and the Venus. The paintings of other races are flat and insipid, without meaning and life, when placed side by side with the grand creations of European schools. The literature of the Grecian and Roman survives their public life. Language has never been employed with such subtle skill, as by the poets, philosophers, and historians of southern Europe.

The japhetic races have been foremost and are foremost in the art of war. They bring to bear combinations of qualities, vigor, bravery, hardihood, skill, together with weapons of warfare, which renders resistance, upon the part of other races, useless.

Again: they are foremost in the art of government. No African race,—none of the families of Ham, none of the semitic races have approached them in this talent. They are conspicuously strong and sagacious. They understand the organization of states and the administration of affairs; they understand the relations of individual liberty to public law. They have kings or they dispense with them, emperors or democracies as each particular state or nation may determine—but wo to him who annihilates or seeks to annihilate their civil and personal

freedom. Rome in ancient days and the Anglo-Saxon races in these modern times, present most striking instances of this rare gift. It is a gift in which the Hebrew race was and is deficient. Its strength never lay in its capacity for government. The genius of the people has never inclined them to find in government the sphere for its activity. But the whole world in fact affords nothing hitherto equal to the power of the Roman in this great art. Roman laws to this day are the study of all intelligent jurists.

But more than all this—Japheth has ever been the great colonist and wanderer. It is his race-peculiarity, or at least one of his strongly marked peculiarities, to occupy new territory. We have seen that in the early dawn of the life of man upon this earth, he wandered from Asia into Europe. After thousands of years had passed, and with them, revolutions involving birth, life and death of nations—the process ever going on with all its tragic accompaniments—a man set sail from Europe towards the setting sun, not quite four hundred years ago, and now, this new world, unknown to the ancients, is peopled with japhetic races. We have overspread the continent, and we stand at this moment upon the shores of the Pacific, and look across the smooth sea, with longing eyes towards China, towards Asia itself, the cradle and home of the human race. Japheth

goes every where. This has been, as I have said, his race-peculiarity for thousands of years.

The japhetic races, let me repeat, carry religion every where. But it must be remembered that these races were idolatrous, worshippers of many gods, while Shem was bearing witness to the unity and holiness of Jehovah. Now mark this. By an extraordinary revolution, they renounced their own hereditary religion, whether expressed in the exquisite human mythology of the south of Europe, or in the colossal saga of the north, and received a religion foreign to their own style of thinking, from Shem, the worshipper of Jehovah God. When the christian religion was first preached, it was carried to Greece and Rome by apostles themselves. The church was forthwith planted upon the soil of Europe, and the name of Christ began to be whispered in the imperial palace, upon the palatine hill. In the course of a few centuries, the "new religion" swallowed up the idolatries which had lasted a thousand years. Japheth thus received his faith through Shem. He became a diligent, life-long student of the Hebrew scriptures, of prophet and psalmist. He has commented upon them, has penetrated their meaning, has translated them into all tongues, and distributed them throughout the globe. He has become their great interpreter. The living actual interest in Jehovah, is now represented by Japheth; the ideas communicated by He-

brew prophets, more than two thousand years ago, touch his brain and heart, while there is a vail upon the heart of Shem.

He goes every where : he sails upon every sea, he climbs every mountain : he exhumes even the cities that have been buried for ages. He plants his new colonies, he organizes new governments and he carries his religion with him--the gospel of the Son of God, preaching the truth, the idea, the life revealed to the world by our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Blessed be Jehovah God of Shem.” . . . “God shall enlarge Japheth and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem.”

I present this subject to your intelligent reflections, brethren, as an evidence both of divine agency in the affairs of this world, and of divine revelation for the enlightenment of men. Races do not make themselves : that is, they do not originate their own peculiarities, nor do they control by their own will, their destiny. We cannot for a moment suppose that Moses, Deborah, Samuel, David, Isaiah, were lifted so entirely above the conditions of humanity as even to suspect that their thoughts and actions would live in the minds and hearts of other races whose very names they could not know. We do not suppose that Israel, in the days when God spake by the prophets, dreamed of the power they were destined to have and to hold over the world.

This fact is ordered by the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. It is of divine providence that the place of Israel in history, is fixed. It is of divine providence that Shem and Japheth form the poles, around which, as upon an axis, the most glorious interests and movements of history revolve. All that makes life wonderful, all that imparts hope to the future, and meaning to the present, all that makes the past worthy of our reverence and study, can be found in the grand, indelible race-marks of Shem and Japheth, in the work, the endowments, the activities, the life of the nations comprehended within this designation. Up to this present moment Japheth enlarges his borders. Upon the east, the great Slavonic race is entering upon new phases of its public life with wonderful power and vigor; upon the west the American people, harrassed, suffering, bleeding, yet conquering in a gigantic war, is buoyed not only by the glory of victory, but by the large hope that its civilization and freedom shall be triumphantly justified, and that its future shall be marked by the successful pursuit of all the callings and interests which can guarantee national strength and individual well-being. Seen and studied in the light of history, our text is a wonderful prophecy, and surely no large demand is made upon the credulity of men, when claims for the divine origin of the sacred record are put forth. We appeal at once to the honest convictions of the hu

man heart. We might be puzzled indeed, we might hesitate even in our faith, if our prophetic oracle here were isolated—a sort of sibylline leaf—unknown in its origin and design; if it were not connected with other records, which claim to exhibit the beginnings and the course of God's kingdom upon earth. It is, however, not isolated, but a portion of an organic whole. And if the races themselves moved onward and still move onward, in accordance with the oracle made thousands of years since, our faith in the agency of God in scripture, becomes in so far forth justified at the bar of human reason itself. It is one of the evidences of revelation; one of the marks of the presence of God to the spirit of man and *in* the history of the world. A great fact confronts us—a fact as patent to the mind, as the movements of the stars in the heavens. God is manifest in the course and destiny of races. God has spoken to us through the agency of man. Human history itself becomes a revelation. We can enter into the conception of the great Italian to whom the course of providence was unfolded as a “*commedia*,” and in the march of events, we can discern the sovereignty of the unseen Ruler, whose wisdom, grace, and goodness are made known in Christ, that we may reach the glorious prize of unending fellowship with Him.